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Letter dated 22 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Spain and the United Kingdom, as Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, have the honour to transmit herewith the guidelines of the new mechanism, created pursuant to Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 22 December 2016 from the Permanent Representatives of Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Guidelines for the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

I. Purpose and scope

The purpose of these guidelines is to outline the objectives and working methods of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security created pursuant to Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) and to provide general information about the mechanism. This includes the origins and mandate of the Group, its broader goal and specific aims, suggestions for a standardized structure and set of procedures, and the expected outcomes.

II. Background

In its review, the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations concluded: "Despite annual debates on women and peace and security of the Security Council, there is inconsistent application of the agenda during the rest of the year, including during mandate formulation and renewal consultations, which is exacerbated by the lack of attention to those issues in briefings and reports to the Council by the Secretariat and senior mission leaders" (A/70/95-S/2015/446, para. 257 (h)).

That sentiment was echoed by the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000),[1] in which the Security Council's performance on the issue was reviewed, with the conclusion that, in spite of the steady expansion of the women and peace and security agenda in its work throughout the years, the Council still remained largely inconsistent in its oversight of how its decisions on women and peace and security had been translated into action. It was recommended that an informal expert group on women and peace and security be established in the Council, with a view to improving the flow of information and analysis to the Council with respect to women and peace and security in country-specific situations and to sharpening the focus and specificity of Council deliberations, oversight and actions on women's participation and leadership, one of the central tenets that support conflict prevention and underpin long-term stability.

In his report on women and peace and security for 2015 (S/2015/716), the Secretary-General encouraged the Security Council to review this recommendation and to act on it without delay. On 13 October 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2242 (2015), in which it recognized the ongoing need for greater integration of resolution 1325 (2000) in its own work in alignment with resolution 2122 (2013), including the need to address challenges linked to the provision of specific

[1] The report on the global study is available at http://wps.unwomen.org. The review of the Security Council's performance is outlined in chapter 11.

information and recommendations on the gender dimensions of situations on the Council's agenda, to inform and help strengthen the Council's decisions, and therefore in addition to elements set out in resolution 2122 (2013), and in accordance with established practice and procedure: (a) expressed its intention to convene meetings of relevant Security Council experts as part of an informal expert group on women and peace and security to facilitate a more systematic approach to women and peace and security within its own work and enable greater oversight and coordination of implementation efforts.

The new mechanism was co-chaired during its first year by Spain and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Group held meetings on issues pertaining to women and peace and security in Afghanistan (see S/2016/673), the Central African Republic (see S/2016/672), Iraq (see S/2016/683) and Mali (see S/2016/682) during the first part of the year and followed up with each country in the second part of the year (see S/2016/1059, S/2016/1105, S/2016/1104 and S/2016/1103, respectively).

III. Objectives

The defining principle of the Informal Expert Group is that better information and analysis, combined with direct interaction, leads to better oversight and stronger implementation of responsibilities pertaining to women and peace and security. It is intended to provide a space for transparent, regular, systematic and timely consultation between country experts and United Nations entities on concerns regarding women and peace and security in country-specific situations, in order to facilitate increased systematic attention to women and peace and security during formal Council deliberations and action on the ground. The increased flow of relevant information and analysis should enable greater oversight and better coordination of implementation efforts by the Council. The Informal Expert Group will also inform and help to strengthen the Council's efforts to mainstream the women and peace and security agenda in its daily work and will support the implementation of commitments outlined in resolutions 2122 (2013) and 2242 (2015) in relation to country-specific and thematic deliberations and decision-making in the Council.

IV. Structure

In 2016, the Informal Expert Group was co-chaired by Spain and the United Kingdom, the latter also being the pen holder for women and peace and security. In 2017, the Co-Chairs will be Sweden and Uruguay. From 2017 onwards, the pen holder will continue to provide overall leadership for the functioning of the group, alongside the Co-Chair(s). Whenever possible, the Co-Chairs should be geographically diverse and fulfil this role for the duration of their term on the Council.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) will act as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group. This requires preparing the information that Council members will receive, coordinating input from the various United Nations entities, both in the field and at Headquarters,

presenting recommendations to the Council, summarizing and proposing follow-up action after meetings and tracking the Group's impact. UN-Women will coordinate and consult with the United Nations Secretariat for countries on the agenda with a peacekeeping or special political mission, and with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict on all observations and recommendations related to conflict-related sexual violence, but will aim to consult broadly with all relevant United Nations entities working on human rights, humanitarian action, development and peace and security.

V. Agenda

At the beginning of each year, the Co-Chairs of the Informal Expert Group and the pen holder for women and peace and security should decide which country situations will be on the agenda of the Group. Based on good practice during the Group's first year of work, it is preferable to focus on four to six countries and to follow up periodically and as needed every six months, as long as there is scope for action and value added. The selection of countries can be guided by the following criteria: (a) strategic opportunity for impact by the Council; (b) the capacity of the United Nations system to generate relevant information and analysis; and (c) the diversity of country situations, both geographically and with regard to conflict phase, whether at risk, active or in transition and recovery.

For each meeting, the Co-Chairs will invite the senior leadership of the United Nations in the country in question to brief the Group and suggest parameters for the discussion. UN-Women will prepare the necessary background reading for Council members ahead of the meeting. Both the background notes and the briefings of mission and country team actors should provide information on women and peace and security that is relevant to the Council. This does not include reporting on all activities or interventions, unless they have helped to achieve a particular milestone or goal. Instead, the Council may be interested in focusing on some of the areas outlined below. Suggestions are included for how progress can be made in each.

- Available data and recent trends, whether positive or negative, on women's leadership and participation in decision-making entities involved in peace and security processes, such as Governments, parties to peace negotiations and bodies tasked with implementing peace agreements or recovery plans, and in key sectors such as justice and security.
- If there is a peacekeeping or special political mission, the current capacity of its expertise on gender and the protection of women, the current gender balance in its military, police and civilian components and the status of mechanisms for coordination between the country team and civil society.
- The short- to medium-term plans of the mission or other United Nations entity for advancing the women and peace and security agenda, and ongoing or planned measures to address any gaps or deficits in implementation.
- The genuine commitment of government actors to implementing national or international commitments relevant to women and peace and security, or conversely, examples of neglect or obstruction with respect to such implementation, and the role of other conflict parties with regard to the status of women in the country.

- If there is a national action plan on women and peace and security, a list of its most urgent and crucial commitments, whether they are being implemented, and if not, the reason for it.
- Protection trends that are directly related to the conflict and that affect women and girls disproportionately, such as conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and widespread sex trafficking; conflict-related killings and injuries, threats and attacks against women political leaders, women human rights defenders or women with similar profiles; abduction and forced marriage of women and girls; attacks on schoolgirls or destruction of school facilities; restrictions on women's rights by violence, stoning and so-called "honour killings"; election-related violence against women; arbitrary detention, intimidation and harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex people by parties to the conflict; and the increased risk and vulnerability experienced by women refugees, asylum seekers and returnees, stateless women and internally displaced women as a result of the lack of safety or services and the existence of discriminatory gender norms.
- Overall trends and data on how the conflict and the humanitarian situation are affecting women and girls on a range of indicators, from food security, health and education, to economic and political participation and the exercise of their rights.
- Where relevant, gender analysis of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, large-scale population displacement, transitional justice, violent extremism and efforts to counter it, and international accountability mechanisms and sanctions.
- Early-warning indicators of anticipated trends affecting peace and security, as highlighted by United Nations entities, women's civil society organizations or other in-country gender experts.

VI. Procedure

The steps outlined in the following table are not prescriptive, but are based on good practice observed during the first year of the Group's work:

Meeting preparation	The Co-Chairs request a briefing from the United Nations leadership by means of a signed letter from their ambassadors, preferably two to four weeks ahead of the meeting, suggesting potential dates. As soon as a date is determined, the Co-Chairs book a room and inform the Security Council members. UN-Women consults with the relevant United Nations entities at Headquarters and in the field, and civil society, to prepare the background reading and key recommendations, to be shared with Council members at least two business days ahead of the meeting, ensures the availability of videoconference and translation services, whenever needed, and invites colleagues from the United Nations Secretariat, agencies, funds and programmes to join. The Co-Chairs inform the permanent mission of the country under discussion and, where possible, arrange a meeting.

Informal Expert Group meeting	The meetings are attended by relevant experts from Security Council member States (on the country under study and on women and peace and security) and from United Nations entities, by invitation of the Co-Chairs and secretariat of the Group. A diverse representation of mission and country team leadership is preferable for the briefings, including military and police. All meetings must include sufficient time for questions from Council members, following the briefing by United Nations entities. Representatives of United Nations entities from the field joining by videoconference or at Headquarters may be invited by the Co-Chairs to participate and answer questions, for which sufficient time needs to be allowed. Where necessary, written follow-up responses can also be provided afterwards. UN-Women provides an overview of the key recommendations presented to the Group and invites staff from the Office of the Special Representative and other relevant entities, for example those involved in human rights, to add their comments as needed. If not already articulated, the Co-Chairs will ask the United Nations entity briefer to identify a few concrete goals on which United Nations leadership can report back in subsequent meetings and in other communications with the Council, to ensure that outcomes are as action-orientated as possible.
Follow-up	The Co-Chairs inform the permanent mission of the country under consideration of what was discussed at the meeting. UN-Women prepares a summary of the meeting, and the Co-Chairs submit it for issuance as a document of the Security Council. All relevant documentation distributed at the meeting will be available on a public website. UN-Women follows up with United Nations colleagues in the field and at Headquarters on the information and recommendations from the meeting. Council members act on the recommendations; the Co-Chairs follow up on such actions. The Group will plan to convene a follow-up meeting, as necessary, approximately six months from the date of the previous meeting.

VII. Expected outcomes

The main goal of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security is to improve the flow of information to the Security Council on women and peace and security issues and to ensure more consistent oversight of, and progress in, implementation efforts by Headquarters-based actors and field actors, respectively. The Co-Chairs, together with the pen holder, will take the initiative to drive this goal forward, although it remains a collective effort. It is intended that United Nations entities and Council members, both at the United Nations and on a

bilateral basis, use the information to guide their policies on women and peace and security and act on the information provided, in order to make a difference with respect to the situation on the ground. Below are some examples of actions that may be taken by Council members:

- Tailoring United Nations mission mandates to include specific and prioritized gender-related concerns most pertinent to the country under consideration.
- Encouraging more information and questions on women and peace and security during meetings of the Security Council: Council members can raise concerns pertaining to women and peace and security during country-specific or thematic briefings or when issues are brought up under the item "Any other business" in consultations. Council members can also support more regular briefings to the Council by the Executive Director of UN-Women, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and by representatives of women's civil society organizations, both in country-specific meetings of the Council and in Arria Formula meetings. In addition, Council members can directly address their questions to briefers, including senior mission leadership, on such concerns as the exclusion or marginalization of women and violations of women's rights in the context of conflict phases, and on details of the mission's plans to address those concerns.
- Fostering greater coherence with subsidiary bodies, including the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism, and sanctions regimes.
- Ensuring, when the Council organizes visiting missions, that elements relevant to women and peace and security are included in the mission's terms of reference, that Council members' gender-specific messaging to government and mission leadership during the visit is improved, that the briefing pack prepared for the visit includes background materials and analysis on women and peace and security and that reporting and follow-up on field missions include relevant substantive elements. The Informal Expert Group may also consider a field visit at the expert level, which would focus exclusively on women and peace and security.
- Sending letters to or initiating a démarche with relevant actors: these actors could include, for example, the Government of the country under review or any other relevant decision maker that could have an impact on the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in that country.
- Requesting additional information or assessments on a specific issue: further to the information shared in the briefing and the background note prepared for the Informal Expert Group meeting, the Group could request, within a given time frame, specific information from relevant actors, such as the mission, government actors or other United Nations entities, including other subsidiary bodies of the Security Council.
- Advocacy by members in their respective national capacity: Council members can use the information in the Group to advocate, either privately with the concerned parties or publicly, such as in media stake-outs, on particular issues related to women and peace and security.